

U.S. General Accounting Office

# GAO Survey of NPL-Eligible Sites: U.S. EPA

## Introduction

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) examines issues for the U.S. Congress. We are conducting a review of contaminated sites that are considered "NPL-eligible." That is, these sites are found to be eligible for placement on the National Priorities List (NPL) after a site inspection by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As part of our review, we are sending surveys to all EPA regions to request information on the individual sites located in their region. We are assessing the likelihood that sites will be placed on the NPL and the activities that are occurring to mitigate contamination at these sites.

This questionnaire asks about 1 of 3,000 NPL-eligible sites nationwide (as of October 8, 1997). In this questionnaire, we ask for information contained in your site inspection records. We are sending a similar survey to the appropriate state/territory/tribe to gain its perspective and to obtain additional information that they might have. Therefore, it is not necessary to consult with the state, territory, or tribe since they are also providing site information to us. Please have the most appropriate EPA staff fill out the questionnaire for the site indicated on the label.

Your response within 21 days of receiving this survey will help us avoid costly follow-ups. If the self-addressed business-reply envelope is missing, please return the questionnaire to the following address:

U.S. General Accounting Office  
Attn: Vincent Price  
441 G Street NW, Room 2T23  
Washington, DC 20548

If you have any questions, please call Vince Price at (202) 512-6529.

Thank you for your assistance.

## Site name and location:

AVENUE O & 118TH STREET  
AVE O & 118TH ST  
CHICAGO IL 60617

CERCLIS #: ILD981194087 GAO #: 2001-A

1. Please fill out the following in case we need to contact the person completing this survey.

Name: Jan Pels  
Phone: 312/886-3009

2. Please answer each question below to determine whether this site should be included in our survey. (Please circle answers.)

a. Is site deferred to RCRA or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission? Yes ☐ No ☒

b. Is site's preliminary Hazardous Ranking System score below 28.5? Yes ☐ No ☒

c. Is site now designated as "no further remedial action planned" (NFRAP)? Yes ☐ No ☒

d. Is site now addressed as part of an existing NPL site? Yes ☐ No ☒

e. Is site proposed for the NPL? Yes ☐ No ☒

3. Did you answer "yes" for any item above? (Check one.)

1. ☐ Yes--> Please stop here and return this survey to us.

2. ☒ No --> Please continue with survey.

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



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**Please note: Because we don't know whose information is most current, we are also asking the state/territory/tribe for answers to Questions 4-8, 13-15, 17, and 19. So, if you do not have the information for those questions, there is no need to contact the state/territory/tribe for the answers.**

#### **Effects of site's contamination**

4. How does contamination at this site affect groundwater? (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ Actual contamination
2. ☐ Potential contamination
3. ☒ No potential or actual contamination identified
4. ☐ Need more information to answer
5. ☐ Other (*Please explain.*)

5. How does contamination at this site affect **drinking water** (surface water or groundwater sources)? (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ Actual contamination
2. ☐ Potential contamination
3. ☒ No potential or actual contamination identified
4. ☐ Need more information to answer
5. ☐ Other (*Please explain.*)

#### **Site conditions**

6. Are there any residents or regular employees within 0.5 miles of the site? (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ Residents only
2. ☐ Employees only
3. ☒ Both residents and employees
4. ☐ Neither residents nor employees
5. ☐ Need more information to answer
6. ☐ Other (*Please explain.*)

7. Do your region's records and/or your knowledge of the site indicate that this site's contamination contributes to any of the following? (Check one for each row.)

(Check one for each row.)	Yes (1)	No (2)	Uncertain (3)	Other (Please explain.) (4)
<b>Drinking water</b>				
a. Residents are advised not to use their wells.		X		
b. Residents are advised to use filtered water.		X		
c. Residents are advised to use bottled water.		X		
d. Water supply is temporarily changed.		X		
e. Water supply is permanently changed.		X		
<b>Other uses of water</b>				
f. Livestock drink contaminated water.		X		
g. Crops are irrigated with contaminated water.		X		
h. Fish could be unsafe to eat.	X			
i. Fish, plants, or animals are sick/dying.	X			
j. Recreation is stopped or restricted (e.g., fishing, swimming).		X		
k. Residents, workers, etc., use water that fails to meet water quality standards (e.g., for bathing, watering vegetable gardens, or landscaping).		X		

(Check one for each row.)	Yes (1)	No (2)	Uncertain (3)	Other (Please explain.) (4)
<b>Soil/air</b>				
l. Residents/others should avoid exposure to contaminated dust or other particulates on some days.		X		
m. Residents are advised not to let children play/dig in their yards.		X		
n. Fences/barriers/signs are erected to keep residents or others out of contaminated areas.		X		
o. Obnoxious odors are present.		X		
<b>Other conditions</b>				
p. Trespassers, including children, may come into direct contact with contaminants.	X			
q. Workers or other legitimate visitors may come into direct contact with contaminants.	X			
r. Institutional restrictions are necessary because of the site's contamination (for example, a deed restriction limits the property to industrial use or a legal limit is placed on well depth).		X		
s. Residents/community have concerns about contamination or potential health effects caused by this site.		X		

### EPA activity at the site

8. Has EPA overseen or funded any of the following activities at this site? (*Check all that apply.*)

1. ☐ Removing waste from the site
2. ☐ Taking other interim actions to mitigate the site's contamination
3. ☐ Constructing final cleanup
4. ☐ Other (*Please specify.*)

5. ☒ *None of the above*  
--> *Skip to Question 10.*

9. In what calendar year did the above site activities begin? (See previous question.) (*Enter two digits.*)

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### State/territorial/tribal activity at site

10. Has the state/territorial/tribal agency participated in evaluating and assessing this site (e.g., gathering information, hiring contractors)? (*Check one.*)

1. ☒ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ *Don't know*

11. Has EPA *funded* any assessment activities by the state/territory/tribe at this site? (*Check one.*)

1. ☒ Yes
2. ☐ No
3. ☐ *Don't know*

### Site risk

12. Please rate the *current risk* to human health and the environment posed by this site. (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ Very high risk
2. ☐ High
3. ☐ Average
4. ☐ Low
5. ☐ Very low risk
6. ☐ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
7. ☒ Other (*Please explain.*)

13. Please rate the *potential risk* to human health and the environment posed by this site if it is not cleaned up. (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ Very high risk
2. ☐ High
3. ☐ Average
4. ☐ Low
5. ☐ Very low risk
6. ☐ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
7. ☒ Other (*Please explain.*)

### Status of site cleanup

14. As of September 30, 1997, will more cleanup be needed at this site to protect human health, or the environment? *(Check one.)*

1. ☐ Definitely yes
2. ☐ Probably yes
3. ☐ Uncertain
4. ☐ Probably no
5. ☐ Definitely no
6. ☐ *Cannot say; depends on future spread of contamination*
7. ☒ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
8. ☐ Other *(Please explain.)*

15. Is cleanup currently under way that will complete all remediation needed at this site to protect human health and the environment? *(Check one.)*

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☒ No
3. ☐ Cleanup is under way but it is too early to tell if more will be needed
4. ☐ Other *(Please explain.)*

### PRP involvement at site

16. If you expect participation by potentially responsible parties (PRPs) in this site's cleanup, under what program(s) would this activity occur? *(Check all that apply.)*

1. ☐ *Do not expect PRP participation*
2. ☐ CERCLA after placement on NPL
3. ☐ CERCLA without placement on NPL
4. ☐ RCRA (including delegated to state)
5. ☐ State/territorial/tribal program
6. ☒ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
7. ☐ Other *(Please specify.)*

17. Which one of the following **best** describes involvement of PRPs at this site? *(Check one.)*

1. ☐ No PRP likely (orphan site, etc.)
2. ☐ PRP(s) identified, but viability is uncertain
3. ☐ PRP(s) identified, but cooperation is uncertain
4. ☐ PRP(s) will participate in site's cleanup, but extent of participation uncertain
5. ☐ PRP(s) likely to clean up all or almost all of site's contamination
6. ☐ PRP(s) have already begun final cleanup and are expected to fund all or almost all of it
7. ☒ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
8. ☐ Other *(Please specify.)*

### Opinions on site's placement on NPL

18. Considering EPA records and your professional opinion, will this site eventually be placed on the NPL? (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ Definitely yes
2. ☐ Probably yes
3. ☐ Uncertain
4. ☐ Probably no
5. ☐ Definitely no
6. ☐ *Contamination no longer qualifies site for placement on the NPL*
7. ☒ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
8. ☐ Other (*Please explain.*)

19. In your professional opinion, which *one* of the following seems to be the *most likely* outcome for this site? (*Check only one.*)

1. ☐ Cleanup as an NPL site
2. ☐ No NPL listing, but EPA conducts or oversees cleanup (RCRA, removal, etc.)
3. ☐ No NPL listing, but the state/territory/tribe conducts or oversees cleanup (enforcement, voluntary cleanup, state-funded cleanup, etc.)
4. ☐ No cleanup conducted because not needed to protect human health and the environment
5. ☐ Further cleanup action is needed, but will not be conducted (due to limited resources, other priorities, etc.).
6. ☒ Too early to tell/Need more information to answer
7. ☐ Other (*Please describe.*)

20. In your opinion, to what extent does each of the following statements currently explain why this site has not already been proposed for the NPL? (Check one for each row.)

(Check one for each row.)	Major factor (1)	Moderate factor (2)	Minor factor (3)	Not a factor (4)	No basis to judge (5)
a. We consider the state/territorial/tribal program to have the lead for the site.	X				
b. The state/territory/tribe told EPA that it plans to conduct or oversee cleanup.					X
c. The state/territory/tribe is already conducting or overseeing further cleanup or assessment.					X
d. State/territory/tribe is waiting for resources to proceed with cleanup/further assessment.					X
e. We are waiting for the state/territory/tribe to provide necessary information.				X	
f. EPA's assessment resources are limited.				X	
g. EPA's resources for placing sites on the NPL are limited.				X	
h. EPA's cleanup resources are limited.				X	
i. The state/territory/tribe is opposing inclusion on the NPL.				X	
j. The local government/community is opposing inclusion on the NPL.				X	
k. We expect the site to be deferred to RCRA.				X	
l. Our removal program is working on the site.				X	
m. We are waiting for a federal agency (as PRP) to provide necessary information.				X	
n. We need to collect more information on the current risk at this site.				X	
o. Site is awaiting expanded site inspection (ESI).				X	
p. Site is undergoing ESI.				X	
q. Hazardous ranking system (HRS) package preparation is underway.				X	
r. Placing site on NPL is low priority because contamination does not <i>currently</i> threaten humans or the environment.				X	
s. We are waiting for a letter from the governor supporting placement on the NPL.				X	



21. For each contaminant listed below, please indicate the media in which it is present at this site, according to the site inspection records. For the contaminants that are not present or not assessed, check box 1, "Contaminant not present/not assessed." (Check all that apply.)

	(1) <i>Contaminant not present/ not assessed</i>	(2) Air	(3) Soil	(4) Groundwater	(5) Surface water	(6) Other (incl. sediment, biota)
a. Metals			X			X
b. Pesticides						
c. VOCs			X			
d. SVOCs			X			X
e. PCBs			X			
f. Dioxin						
g. Other						

Abbreviations:

VOCs -- volatile organic compounds

SVOCs -- semivolatile organic compounds

PCBs -- polychlorinated biphenyls

22. What is the approximate calendar year of the most recent information that you used to answer this survey? (*Check one.*)

1. ☐ 1990 or earlier
2. ☐ 1991
3. ☐ 1992
4. ☐ 1993
5. ☐ 1994
6. ☐ 1995
7. ☐ 1996
8. ☒ 1997
9. ☐ Other (*Please explain.*)

24. Thank you for your assistance with this survey. You may use the space below to add comments.

23. Please consider the information sources that you used to complete this survey and indicate the category below that most closely fits your situation. (*Check one.*)

1. ☒ Used site records only; have no other experience with this site
2. ☐ Used my own knowledge of this site and site records as needed
3. ☐ Other (*Please explain.*)